

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 EB-11 COME-00 DOTE-00 PM-07

NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11

NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 DRC-01 /125 W

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R 241411Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5839

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELTN, BC

SUBJ: BOTSWANA OPERATION OF RHODESIAN RAILWAY

REF: GABORONE 1274(NOTAL)

1.SUMMARY: MINISTER OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS
HASKINS TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT GOB DECISION TAKE OVER
RHODESIAN RAIL LINE WAS BASED ON BOTSWANA'S PROJECTED
ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DESIRE TO DEVELOP AND OWN ITS RAIL
SYSTEM. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON MINISTER OF WORKS AND COMMU-
NICATIONS HASKINS SEPTEMBER 24 TO DISCUSS GOB DECISION ON
EVENTUAL OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION OF RHODESIAN RAILWAY
SYSTEM IN BOTSWANA.

3. MINISTER HASKINS STRESSED THAT BOTSWANA'S RAPID
RATE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT JUSTIFIED DECISION ASSUME
OWNERSHIP AND OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF ITS OWN RAIL SYSTEM.;
H NOTED PLANS TO CONSTRUCT OPAMILE RAIL LINK FROM FRANCISTOWN
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VIA MATSITAMA TO DUKWE IN SUA PAN. SUCH A LINK WAS REQUIRED

TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT SUA PAN BRINE, COAL DEPOSITS NEAR MATSITAMA AND EXPANSION LARGE-SCALE CATTLE RANCHING. PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES INDICATED ANNUAL RAIL FREIGHT WOULD TOTAL 600,000 TONS FROM SUA PAN ALONE. HE NOTED THAT RHODESIA WAS ALREADY OPERATING SPUR TO THE SELEBI-PIKWE COPPER/NICKEL COMPLEX. BOTSWANA DID NOT WISH TO HAVE TWO RAILWAY SYSTEMS; IT WAS BEST FOR THE COUNTRY TO DEVELOP AND OWN ITS OWN RAIL SYSTEM.

4. MINISTER HASKINS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE GOB HAD NOT YET DECIDED ON A CONSULTING FIRM TO UNDERTAKE THE STUDY MENTIONED REFTEL. HE SAID GOB HAD APPROACHED CANADIAN AND BRITISH CONCERNS; HE THOUGHT CANADIAN CONSULTANTS WOULD BE SELECTED IN VIEW OF THEIR EXPERIENCE IN ZAMBIA.

5. MINISTER HASKINS THOUGHT BOTSWANA WOULD NEED ABOUT TWENTY DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES INITIALLY. HE OBSERVED THAT GENERAL ELECTRIC HAD JUST RECEIVED AN ORDER FOR 250 LOCOMOTIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THAT GENERAL MOTORS WAS BUILDING A PLANT AT PORT ELIZABETH TO MANUFACTURE LOCOMOTIVES. HASKINS DID NOT THINK BOTSWANA WOULD NEED TO INVEST IN FREIGHT CARS INITIALLY BUT WOULD USE EXISTING SOUTH AFRICAN EQUIPMENT.

6. HASKINS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT TIMING OF BOTSWANA'S TAKE-OVER WOULD DEPEND ON TRAINING OF THE NECESSARY MAN-POWER; HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE FOUR OR FIVE YEARS. NEGOTIATIONS ARE ALREADY UNDER WAY WITH THE RHODESIANS ABOUT TRAINING; STAFF TRAINING IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN NEXT YEAR BY THE RHODESIANS.

7. CONCLUDING THE MEETING, HASKINS NOTED THAT ZAMBIA OWNED 50 PERCENT OF THE RHODESIAN RAILWAY; THEREFORE IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO NEGOTIATE WITH TWO GOVERNMENTS REGARDING TAKE-OVER OF MARSHALLING YARDS, RAIL STATIONS, AND OTHER SUCH FACILITIES.

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